

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
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In Testimony, Attorney General Racine Highlights Importance of Continued Independence for Office of the Attorney General

In Judiciary Committee Roundtable, AG Outlines Measures to Maintain Objectivity

WASHINGTON, D. C. – Attorney General Karl A. Racine testified yesterday before the Council of the District of Columbia’s Committee on the Judiciary in favor of District voters’ overwhelming choice of an independent Attorney General.

In testimony during the committee’s roundtable on legislation related to the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) and the Mayor’s Office of Legal Counsel (MOLC), Attorney General Racine highlighted his efforts to maintain and clarify OAG’s independence and ability to provide objective legal advice and representation that serves District officials and protects the public interest.

“By an overwhelming 76 percent of the vote, citizens of this District passed a referendum in 2010 to establish an Office of Attorney General that would operate independently of the Mayor and the Council,” Attorney General Racine said. **“As the District’s first elected Attorney General, my overarching responsibility is to ensure that we honor the voters’ intent that the OAG serve the public’s interest and serve as a check and balance on our government. We look forward to working with the Council and the Executive Office of the Mayor to achieve these bedrock principles of a mature democracy.”**

The Attorney General highlighted Bill 20-139, the “Attorney General Independence and Authority Implementation Amendment Act of 2015,” which he submitted to the Council. The legislation would clarify the functions of the elected Attorney General and fill in gaps in local law related to the function of the newly independent OAG that have not yet been legislatively remedied.

“Although the referendum creating the independent Attorney General as well as the local law enacted with it established the Attorney General’s broad authority, it did not make all the conforming D.C. Code revisions needed for the explicit codification of this significant modification to the District government’s structure,” Attorney General Racine said. **“Therefore, additional technical changes are needed to reflect the Attorney General’s authority to function in a truly independent fashion, as the voters intended.”**

Attorney General Racine further emphasized that OAG could be even better advocates for the District and its residents if provided with additional resources. Voters demanded an OAG that would be far more engaged with residents and responsive to their most important needs, the Attorney General noted. This means that OAG will:

- Use the law to protect consumers, especially our most vulnerable citizens, from illegal business practices;
- Investigate and prosecute corruption;
- Leverage smart, data-driven investments in the District's juvenile-justice system to enhance safety in the community and provide greater opportunity for young people to break the cycle of crime and hopelessness;
- Enforce affordable housing laws;
- Protect employees from wage theft and other improper labor and employment practices; and
- Enforce environmental laws.

A copy of the Attorney General's testimony as submitted to the Judiciary Committee is attached.

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